



# Public Opinion Survey of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency

by: Assemblyman Tim Leslie

2005-2006

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## **Executive Summary**

This survey was mailed to constituents of the Fourth Assembly District in Placer and El Dorado counties who also live in the Tahoe Basin. Rules guiding legislative mailings prohibited distribution of the survey based on political party affiliation, or to residents of the State of Nevada.

Mail targets were identified using the Assembly District Four registered voter database from the California Secretary of State's Office. At the time of mailing the database indicated 21,623 registered voters living in the California side of the Tahoe Basin. However, as this survey was distributed at the household level, only 14,412 surveys were mailed. To date, 739 surveys have been returned for a return rate of just over five percent.

Although no demographic information was requested on the survey, when available, respondents' identifying information was correlated with limited demographic information available from voter registration records. While in itself such demographic information is interesting, it may also prove useful for future statistical analysis of the data. No such analysis is suggested in this report.

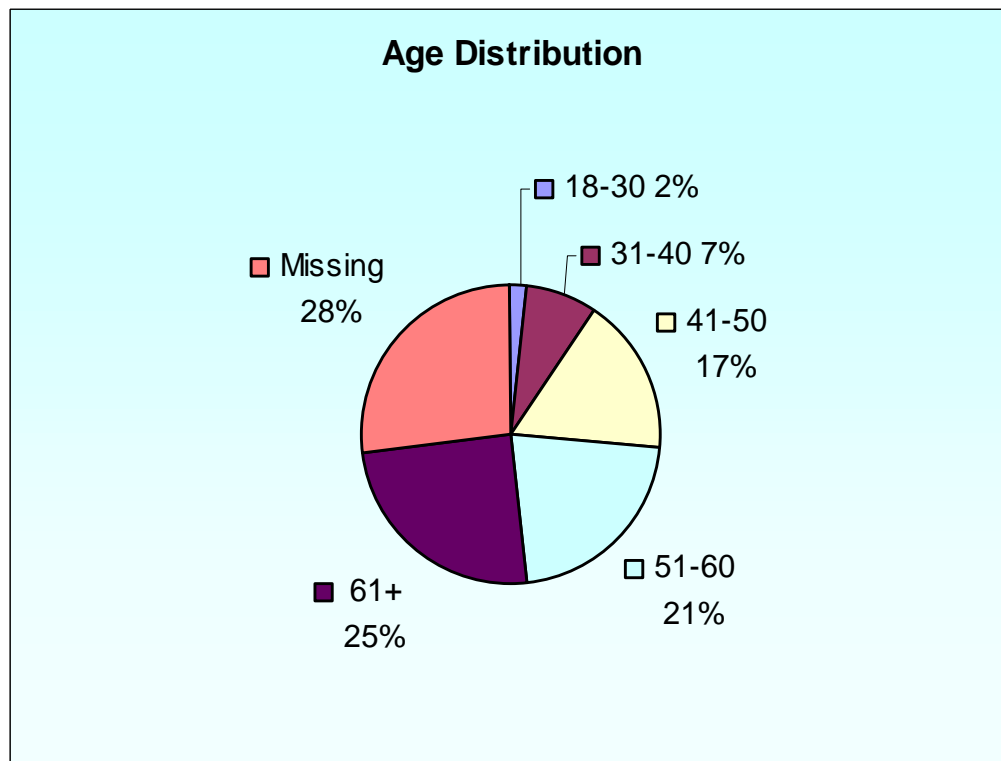
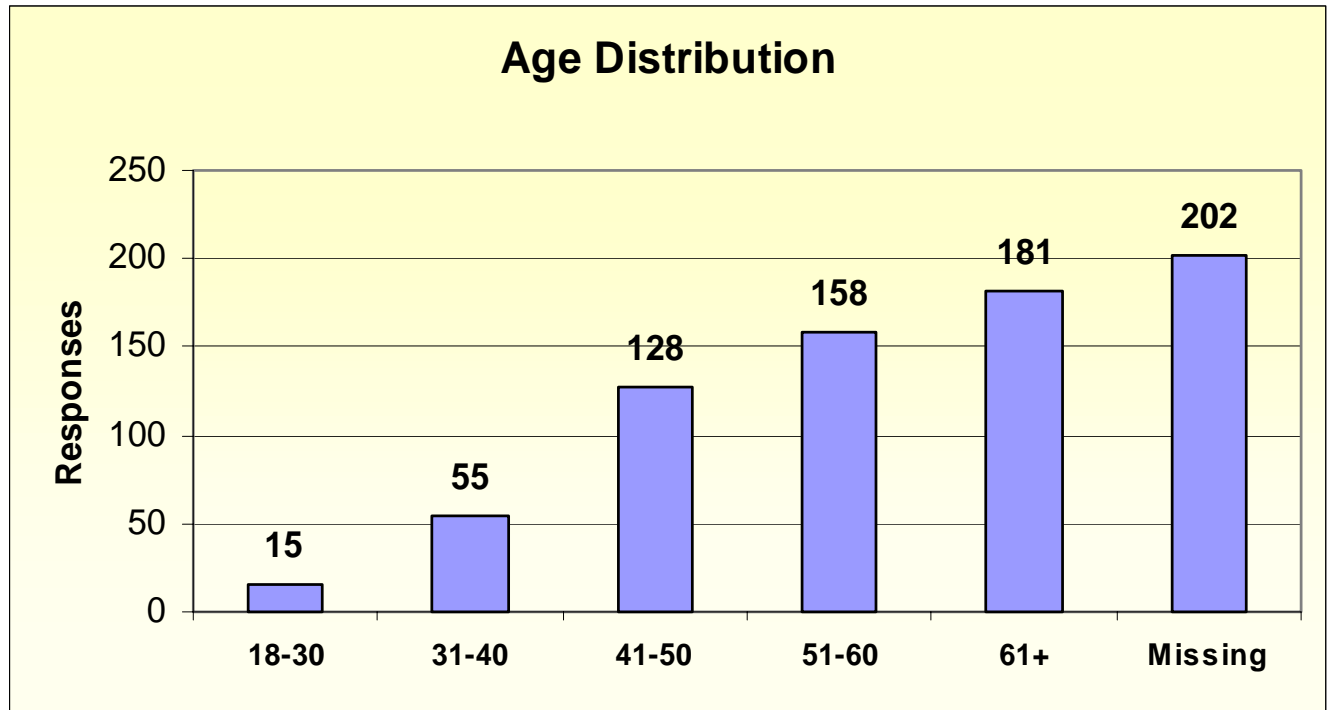
Questions 1 and 2 attempt to determine the level of respondent familiarity with the TRPA in real world terms, and the perception of how TRPA has changed over the last two years. Question 3 asks respondents to rank the Threshold Carrying Capacities outlined in the TRPA Compact. Similarly, Question 4 asks respondents to rank other broad planning related topics. The remainder of the survey gauges respondents' level of agreement or disagreement with topics derived from constituents' comments or newspaper reports about the TRPA.

As the accompanying graphs and charts demonstrate, respondents generally viewed the TRPA with disfavor. However, there are certain categories where respondent opinion about TRPA is more evenly split. Also notable, a significant number of respondents indicated a "neutral" level of agreement with statements included on the survey.

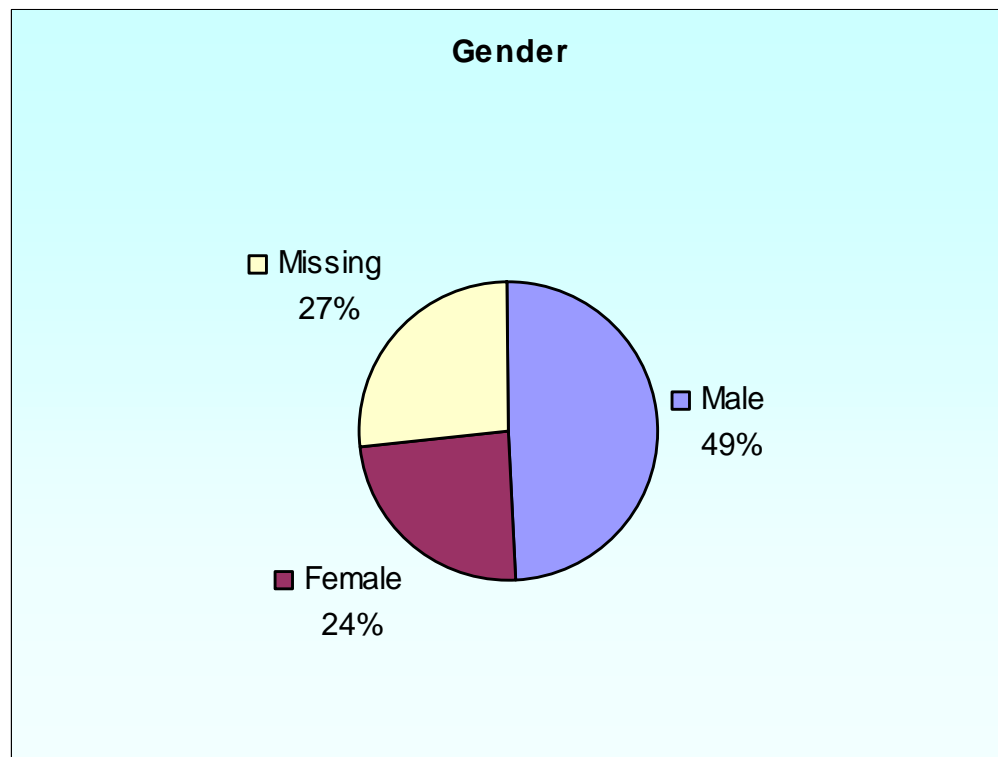
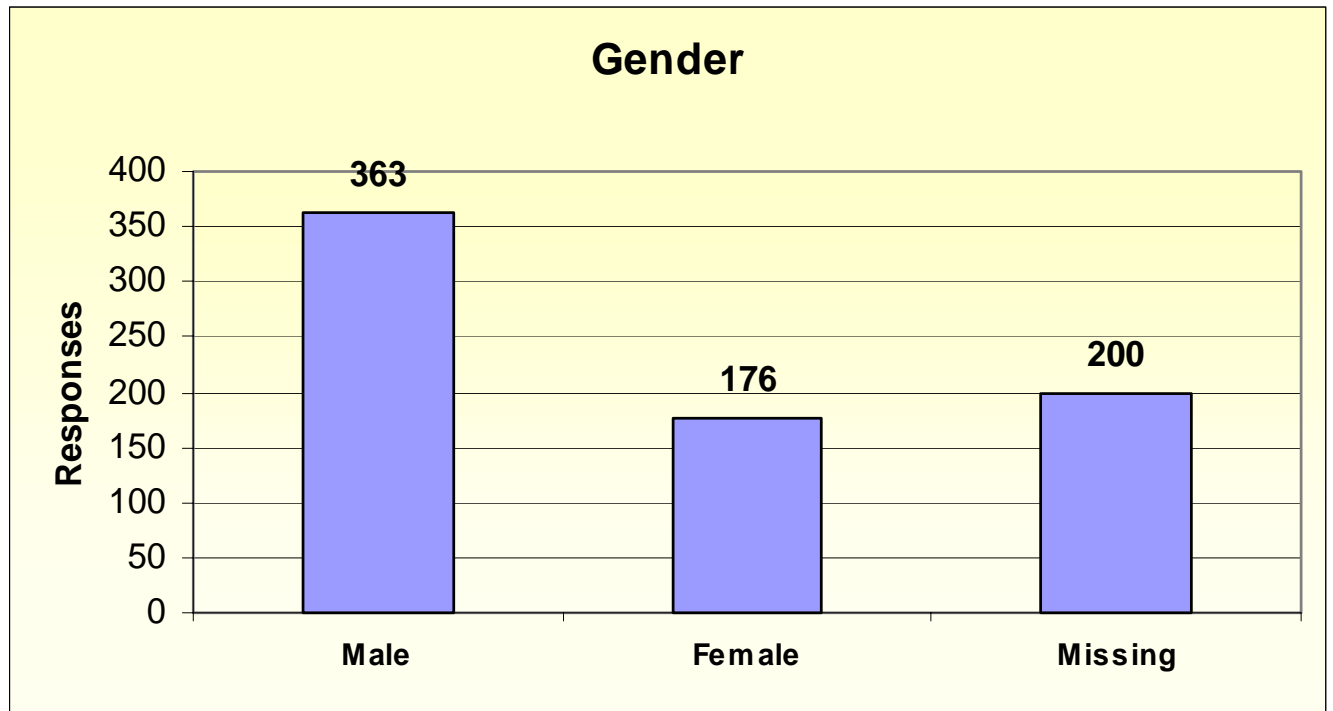
Finally, over half of the respondents included written comments on their surveys. Because these remarks are highly varied, no quantitative assessment of the comments is provided. Constituent comments are available as an appendix to this report by request at [Assemblymember.Leslie@assembly.ca.gov](mailto:Assemblymember.Leslie@assembly.ca.gov). However, any identifying information has been omitted in order to ensure privacy.

# Demographics

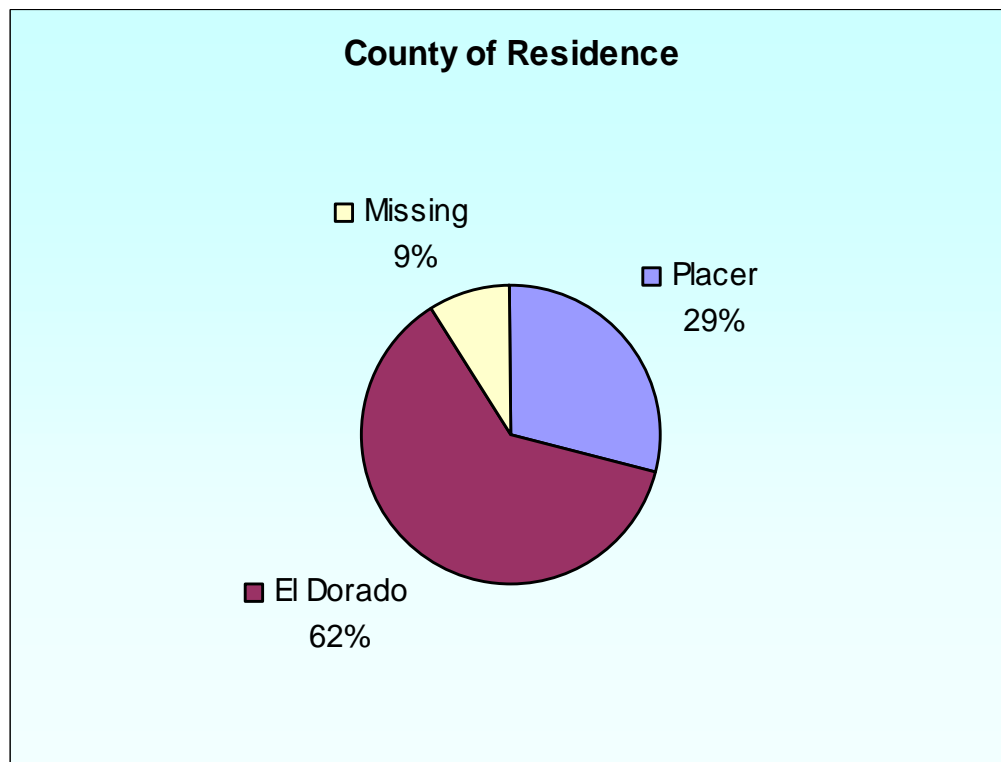
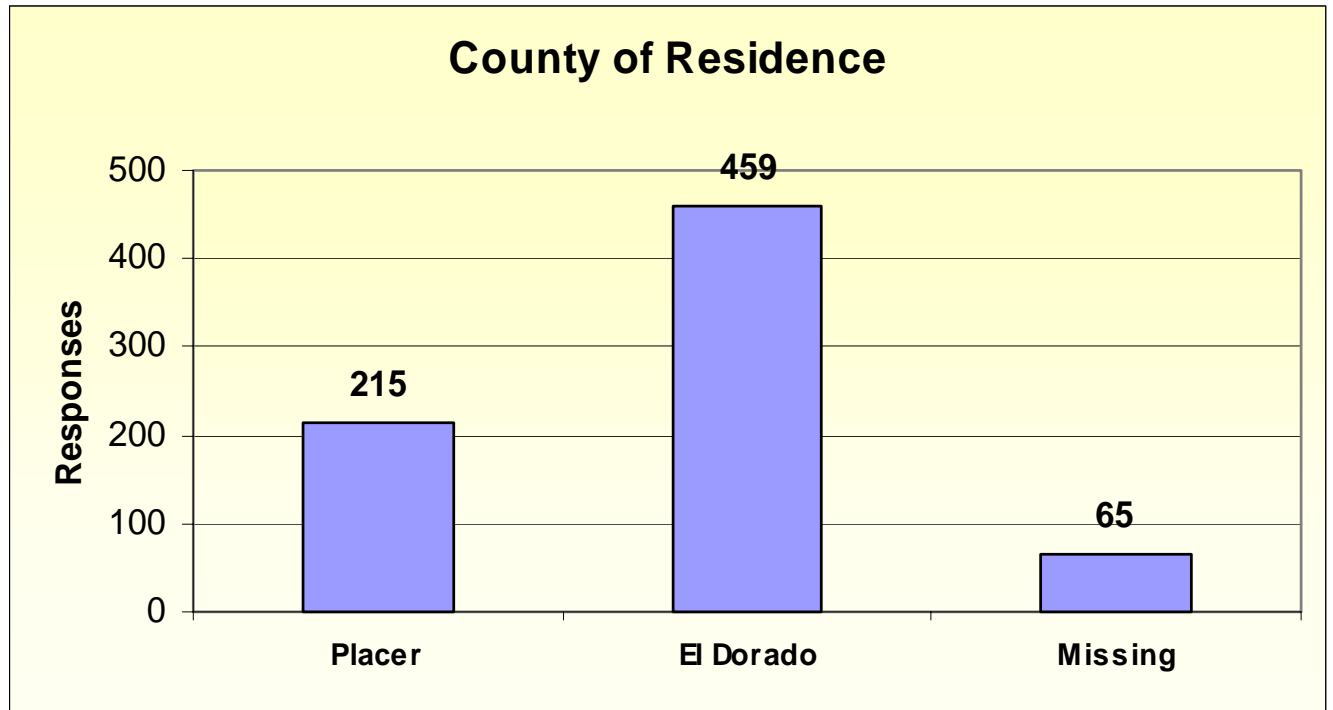
# Demographics



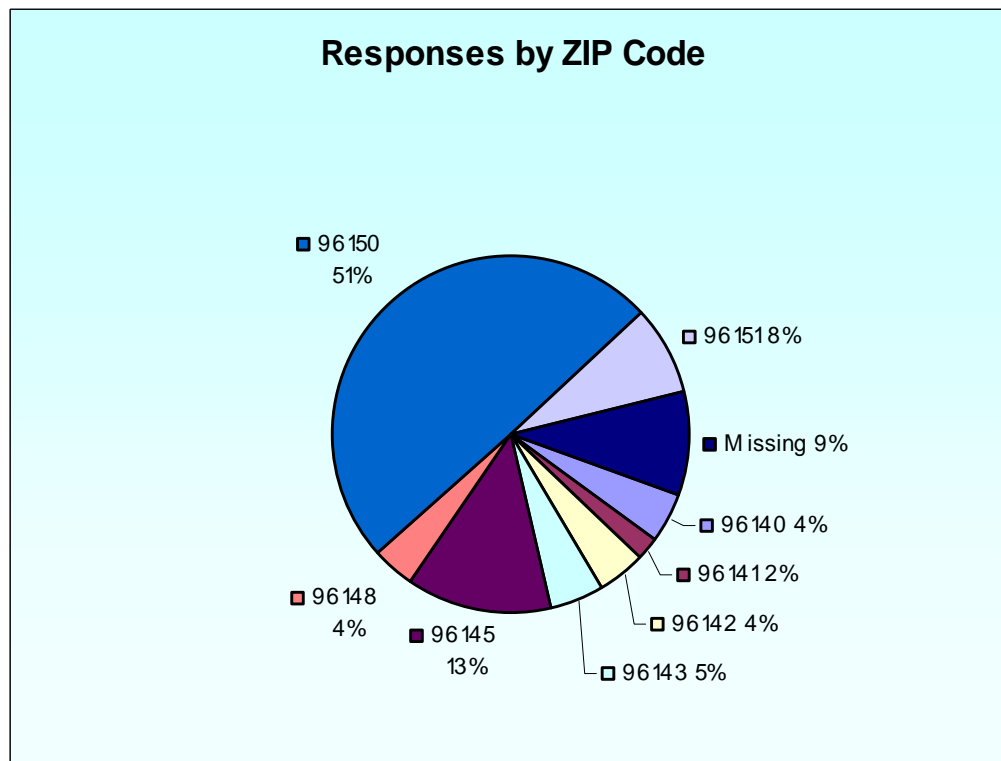
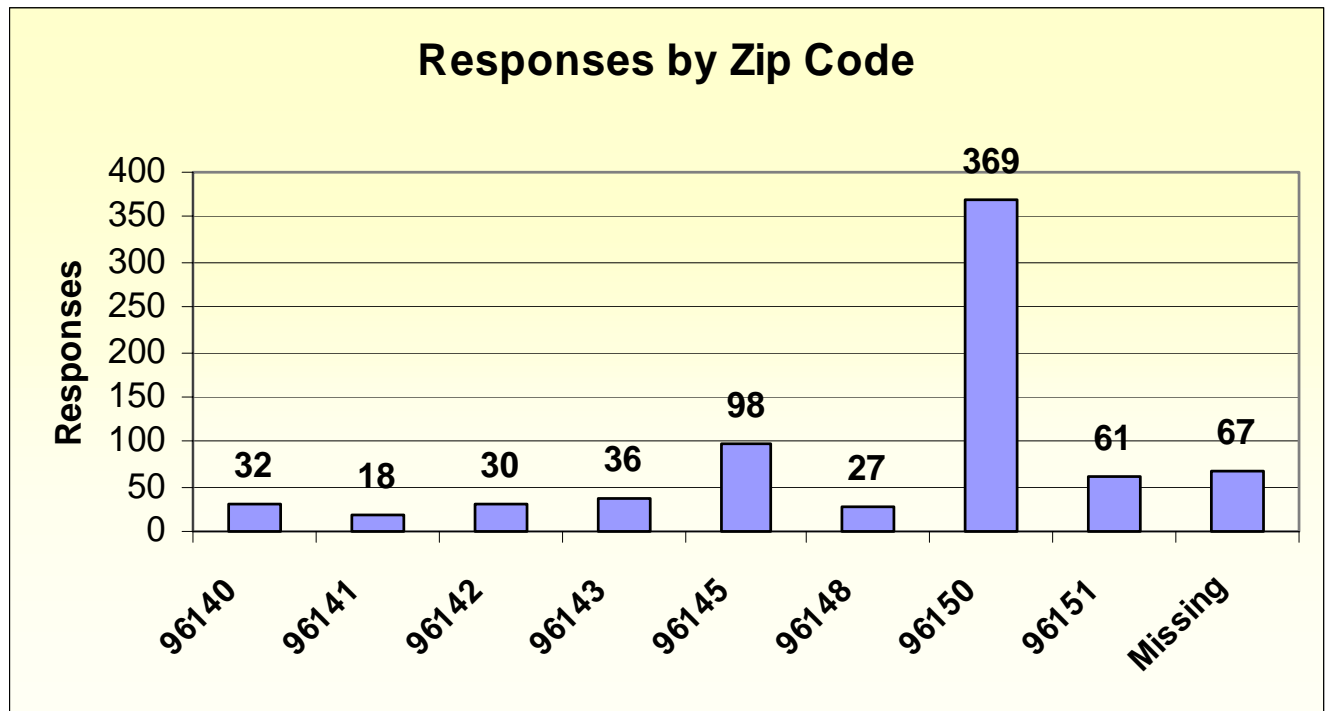
# Demographics



# Demographics

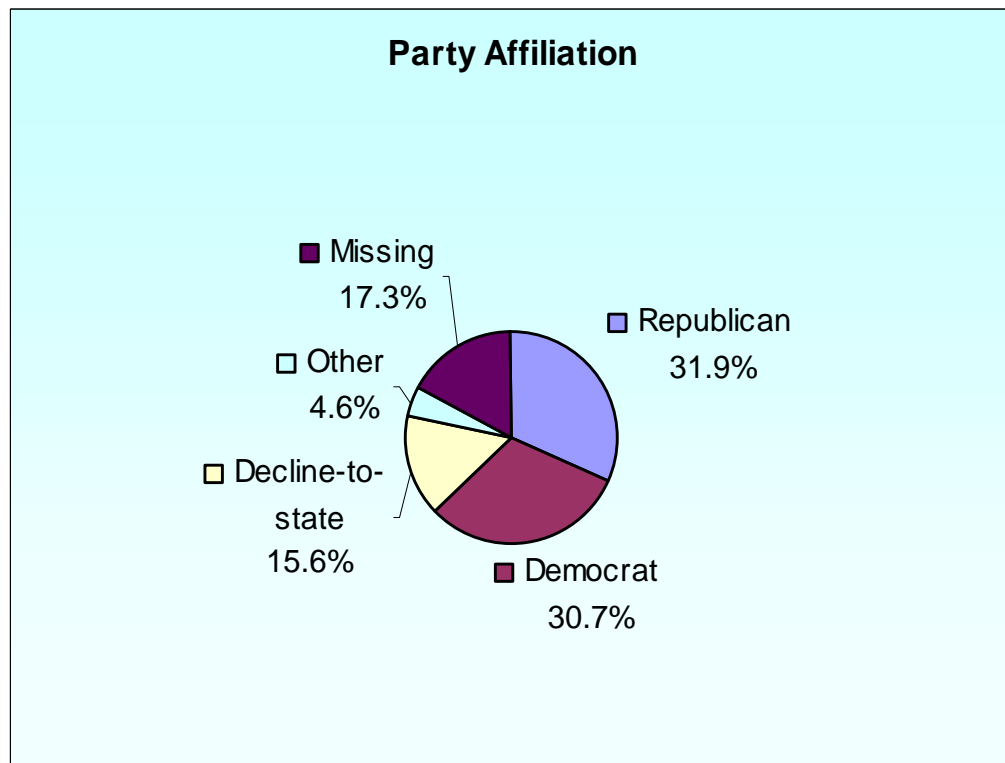
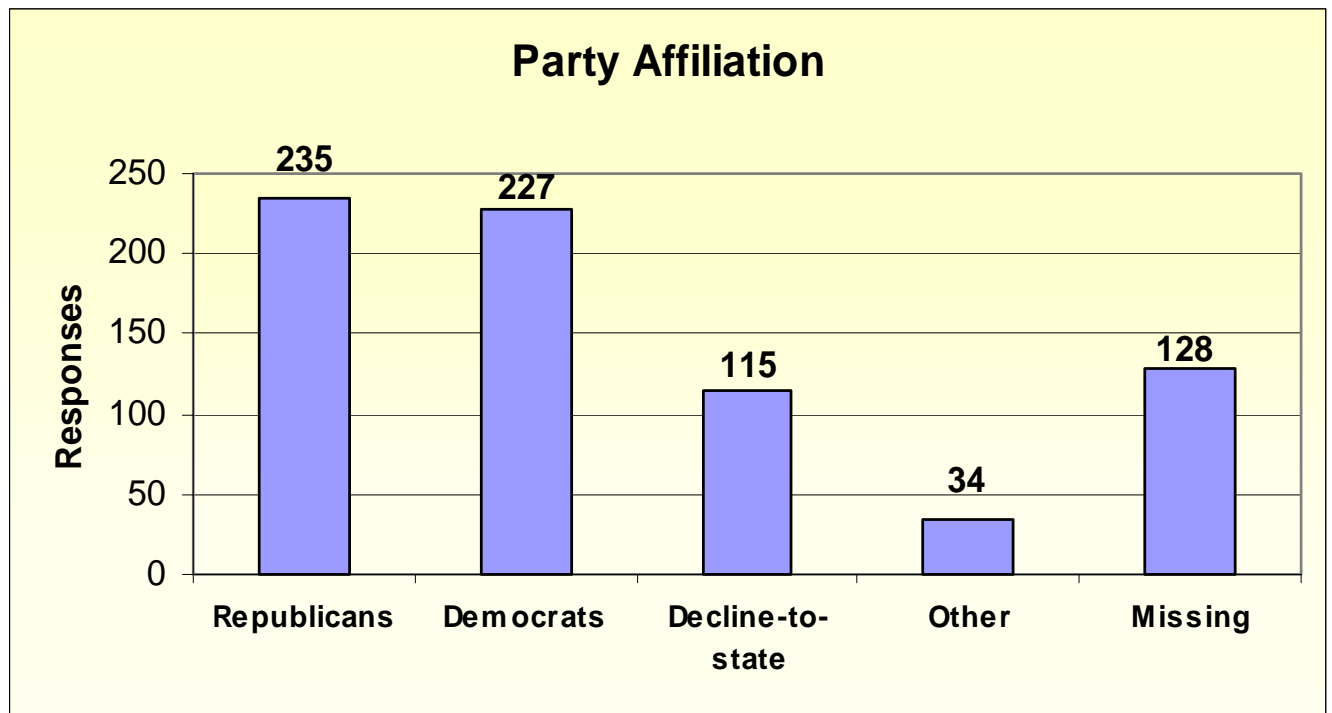


# Demographics





# Demographics



# **Survey Questions 1 - 4**

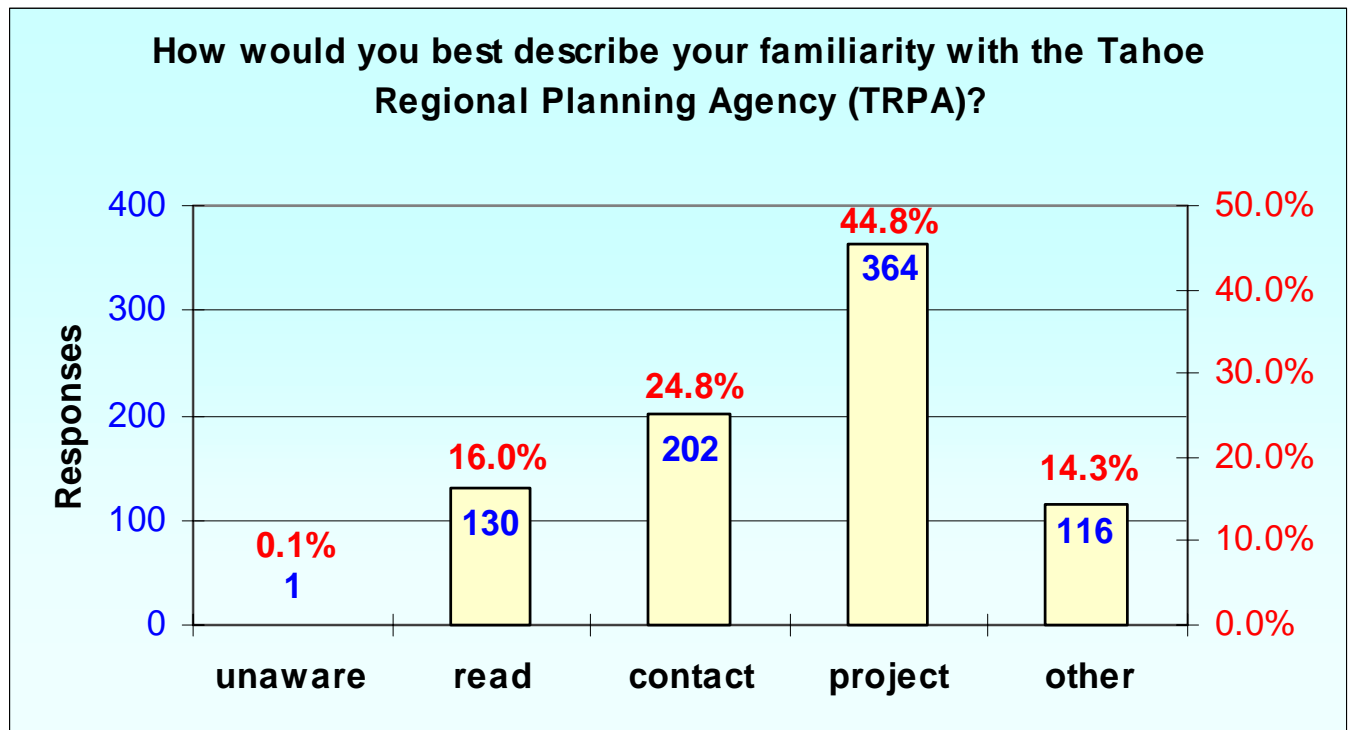
# Tahoe Regional Planning Agency

## Survey – 2006

***“According to the Tahoe Regional Planning Association's (TRPA) ordinance, all agents must have their buyers sign a TRPA approved Best Management Practices (BMP) Disclosure form” (from South Tahoe Association of Realtors website).***

Q1 – How would you best describe your familiarity with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA)?

- I was not aware of the TRPA.
- I have only read about the TRPA.
- I have contacted the TRPA with a concern or a question.
- I currently have or have had a project that required TRPA approval.
- Other.



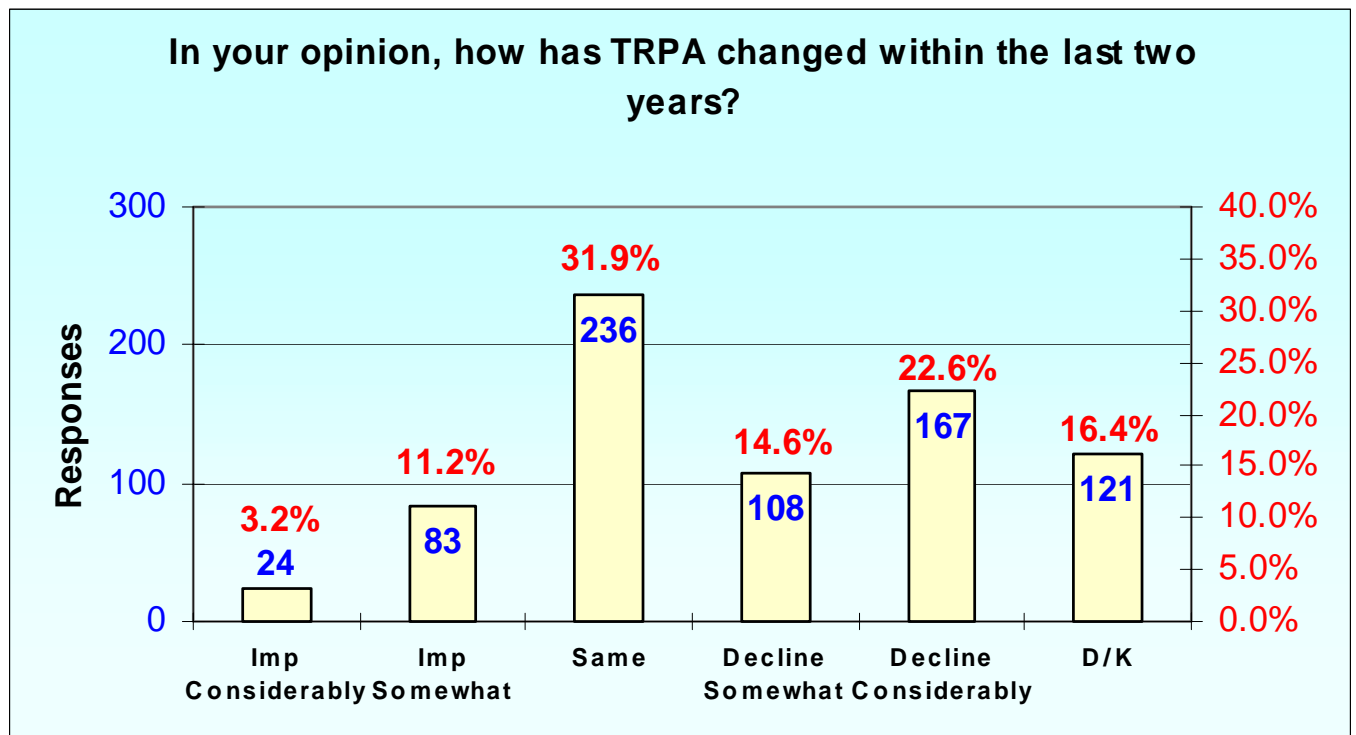
# Tahoe Regional Planning Agency

## Survey – 2006

***“Singlaub is starting out with a realistic vision of what ails the TRPA: Customer Service” (Tahoe Daily Tribune, May 7, 2004).***

Q2 – In your opinion, how has TRPA changed in the last two years?

- Improved considerably.
- Improved somewhat.
- Has remained about the same.
- Has declined somewhat.
- Has declined considerably
- Don't know.



# Tahoe Regional Planning Agency

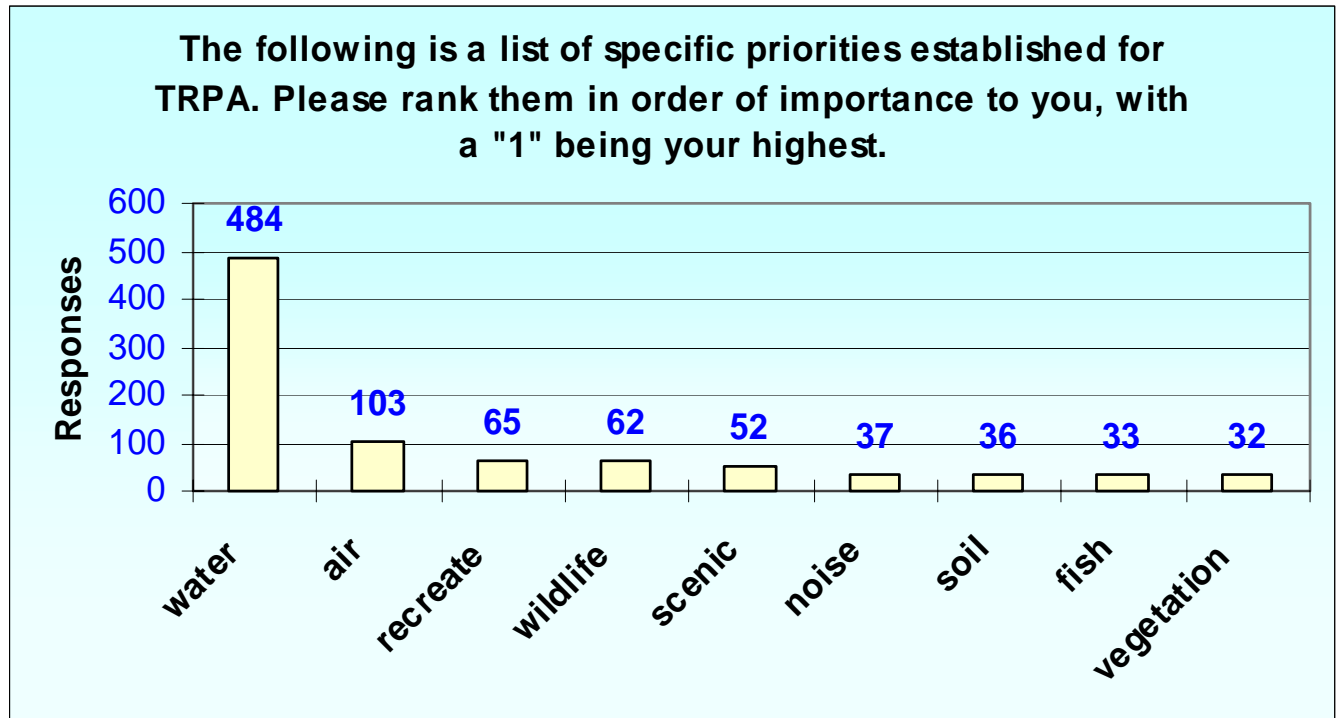
## Survey – 2006

*"To enhance governmental efficiency and effectiveness of the Region, it is imperative [sic] there be established a Tahoe Regional Planning Agency with the powers conferred by this compact including the power to establish environmental threshold carrying capacities and to adopt and enforce a regional plan and implementing ordinances which will achieve and maintain such capacities while providing opportunities for orderly growth and development consistent with such capacities"* (TRPA website).

Q3 – The following is a list of specific priorities established for the TRPA.

Please rank them in order of importance to you, with a “1” being your highest.

Water Quality	___	Air Quality	___	Scenic Resources	___
Soil Conservation	___	Fish Habitat	___	Vegetation	___
Wildlife Habitat	___	Noise	___	Recreation	___



**Note:** This graph shows only the “1” votes cast for each category

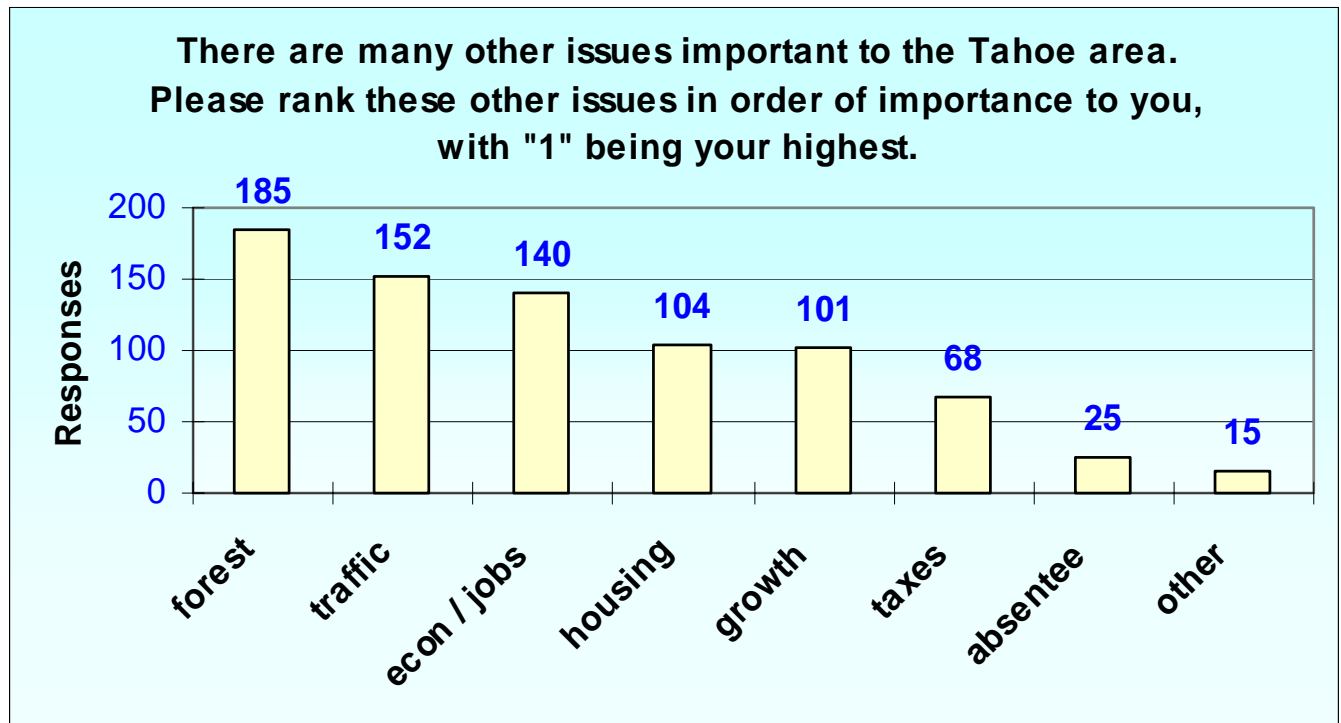
# Tahoe Regional Planning Agency

## Survey – 2006

***“TRPA Executive Director John Singlaub has proposed a ‘triple-bottom line’ in which economics, quality of life and environment are all given equal weight in the planning process” (Tahoe Daily Tribune, January 30, 2006).***

Q4 – There are many other issues important to the Tahoe area. Please rank these other issues in order of importance to you, with “1” being your highest.

Traffic/Congestion \_\_    Local Economy/Jobs \_\_    Housing/Housing Affordability \_\_  
Managed Growth \_\_    Absentee Ownership/Vacation Rentals \_\_  
Forest Management/Fire Safety \_\_    Taxes/Fees \_\_    Other \_\_



**Note:** This graph shows only the “1” votes cast for each category

# **Survey Questions 4-16**

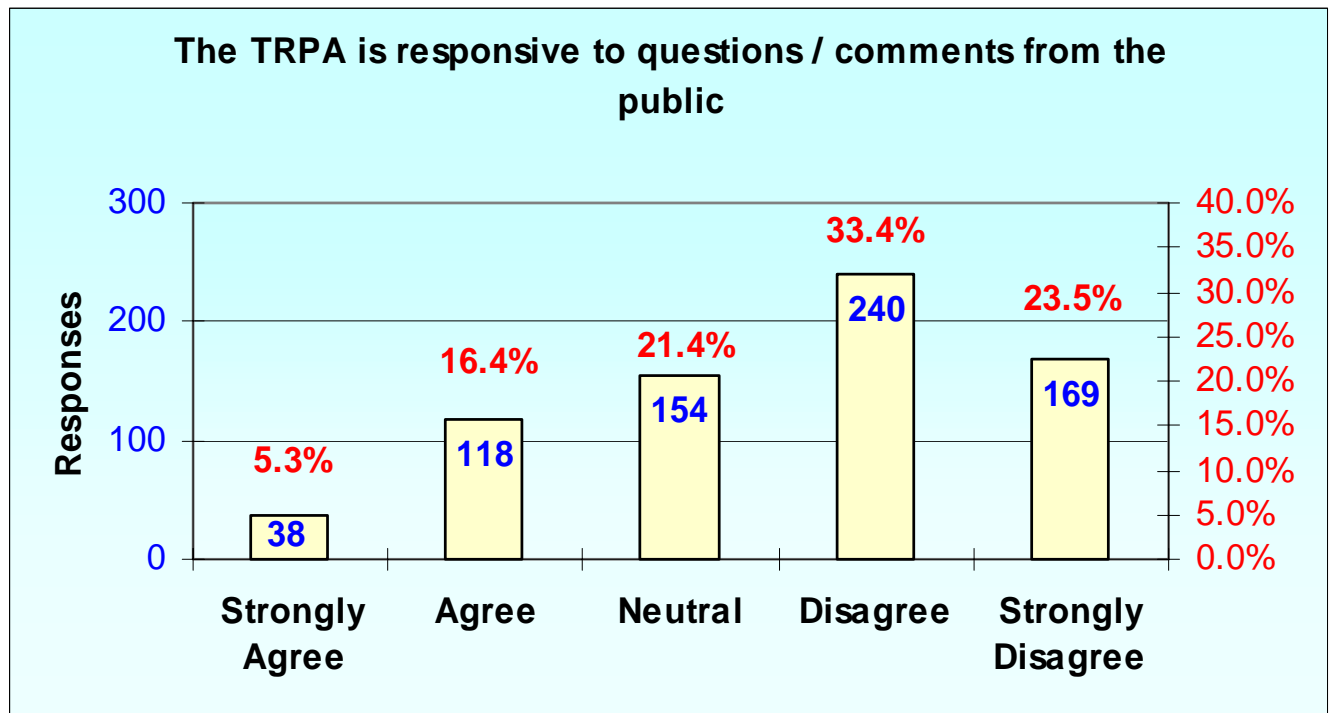
# Tahoe Regional Planning Agency

## Survey – 2006

***“Over the past year, the agency has been operating under a new structure designed to enhance internal processes and improve our customer service”***  
**(Editorial by TRPA Executive Director John Singlaub, Tahoe Daily Tribune, January 27, 2006).**

Q5 – The TRPA is responsive to questions/comments from the public.

☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree





# Tahoe Regional Planning Agency

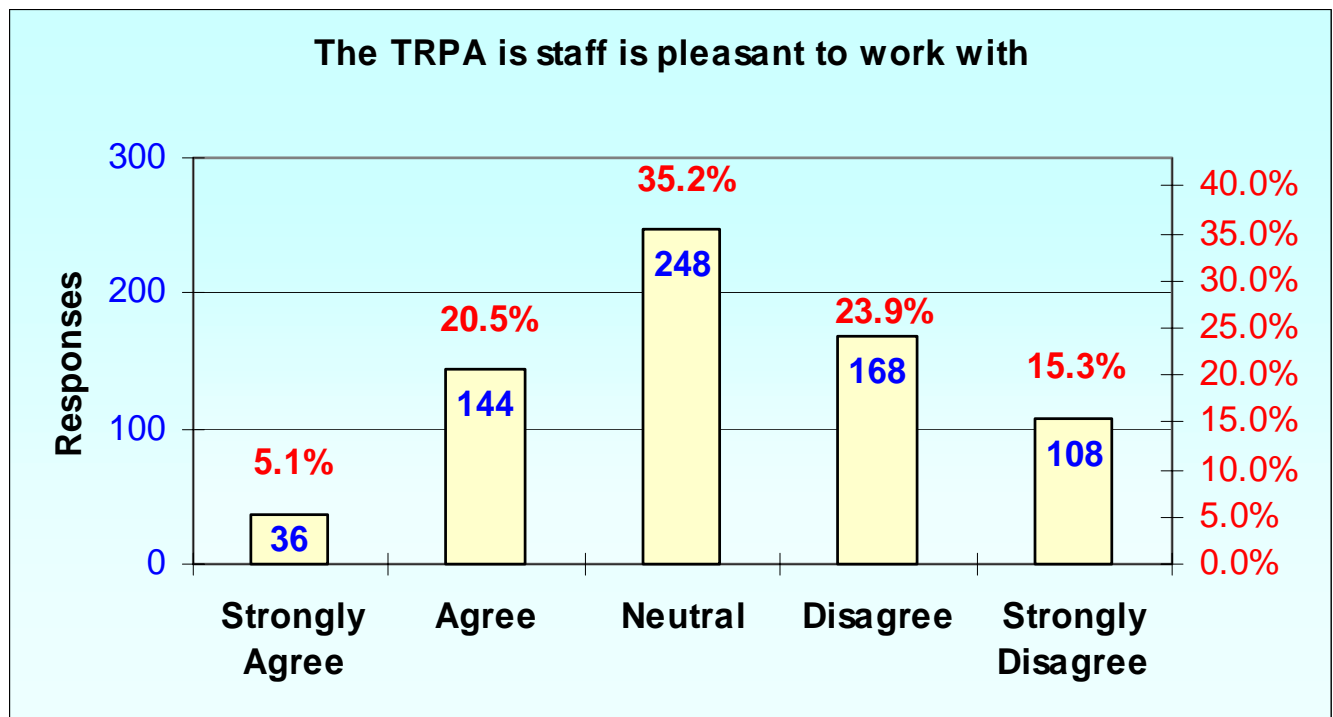
## Survey – 2006

*“Dave Shelton of Shelton and Associates in Tahoe City wrote a letter to Singlaub in November praising no fewer than 15 staff members for their friendliness and helpfulness.*

*Shelton told the Tribune he's dealt with the agency for 27 years, and saw a noticeable change in the last year. ‘Everybody seemed happy to be there,’ Shelton said. ‘If there was an agenda to have a more user-friendly and pleasant interface with the public, they succeeded’” (Tahoe Daily Tribune, January 24, 2006).*

Q6 – The TRPA staff is pleasant to work with.

☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree



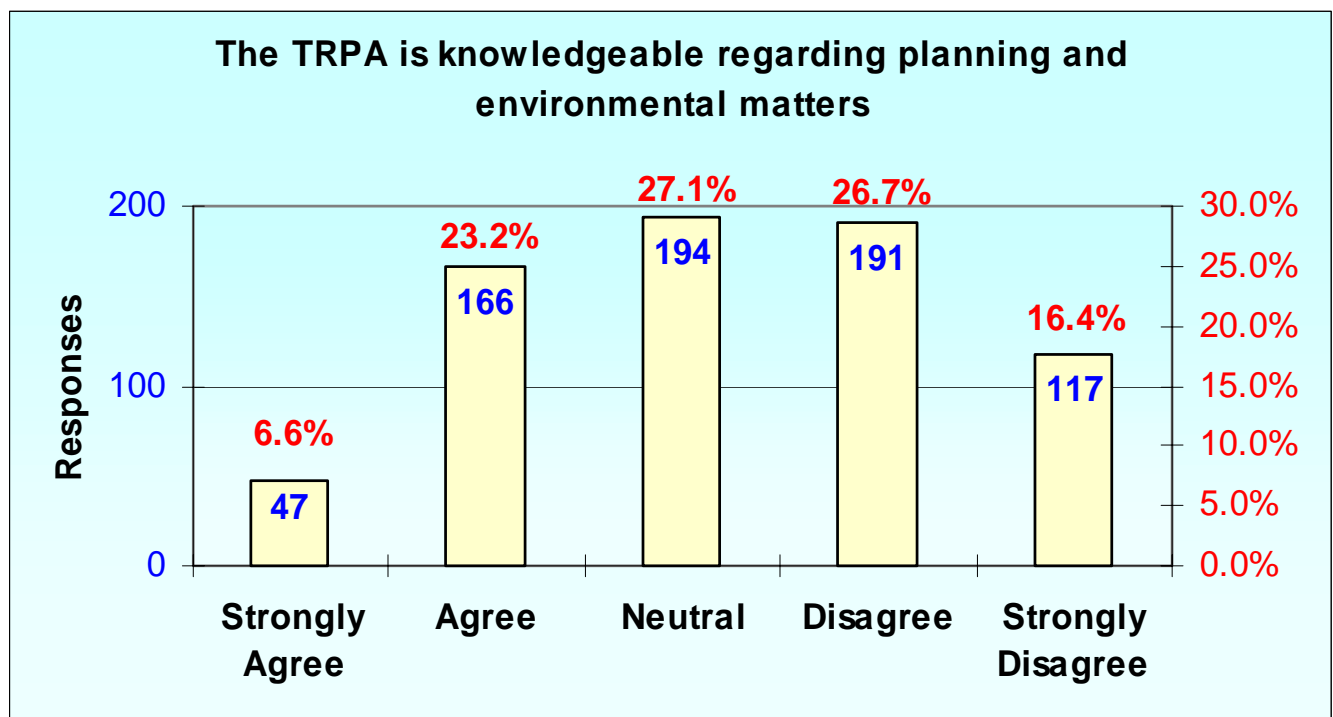
# Tahoe Regional Planning Agency

## Survey – 2006

*"I've noticed a turnover with TRPA staff in recent years. It may be good overall, but we've lost a lot of valuable, dedicated staff over the last couple of years"* (former Governing Board Member Drake Delanoy as quoted in the Tahoe Daily Tribune, September 30, 2005).

Q7 – The TRPA staff is knowledgeable regarding planning and environmental issues.

☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree



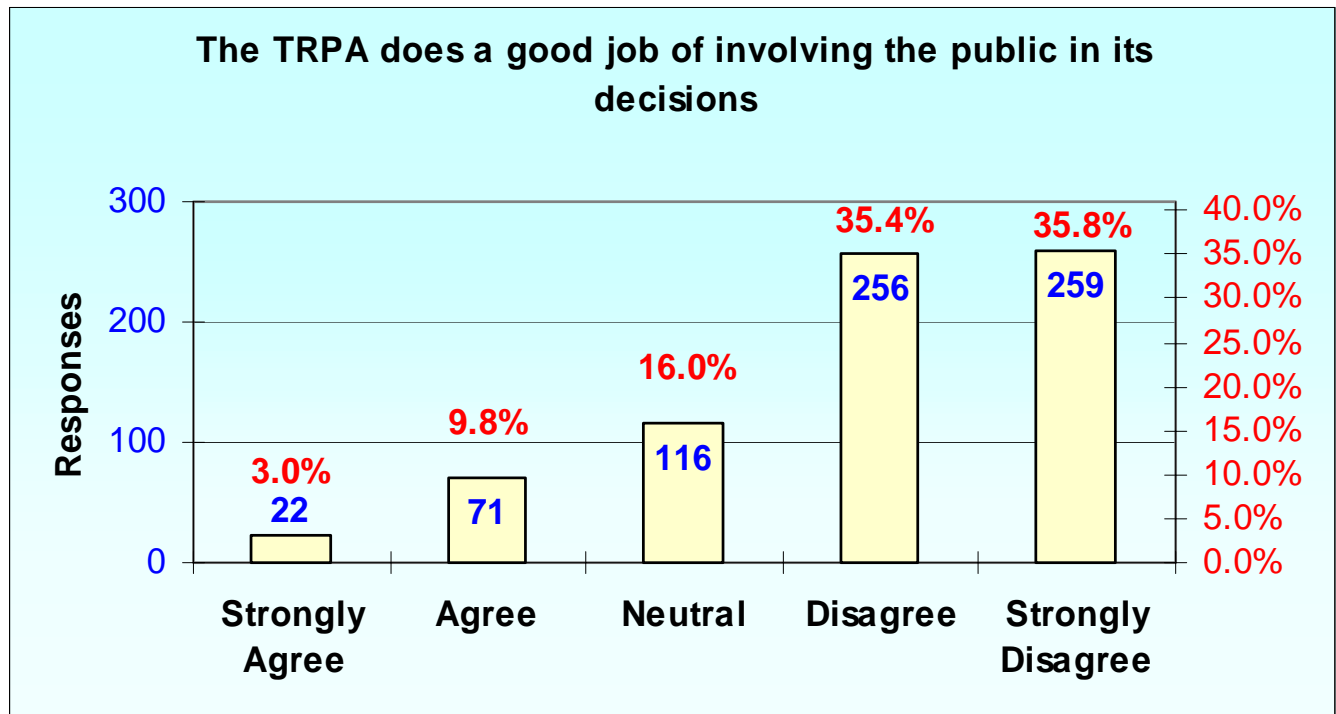
# Tahoe Regional Planning Agency

## Survey – 2006

*“We extended the public comment period to 120 days to ensure all voices were heard on these proposals. Since then, we’ve incorporated the community’s feedback and have developed a new alternative for the shorezone environmental document. We’re circulating this alternative for additional public comment for another 60 day”* (Editorial by TRPA Executive Director John Singlaub, Tahoe Daily Tribune, July 8, 2005).

Q8 – The TRPA does a good job of involving the public in its decisions.

☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree



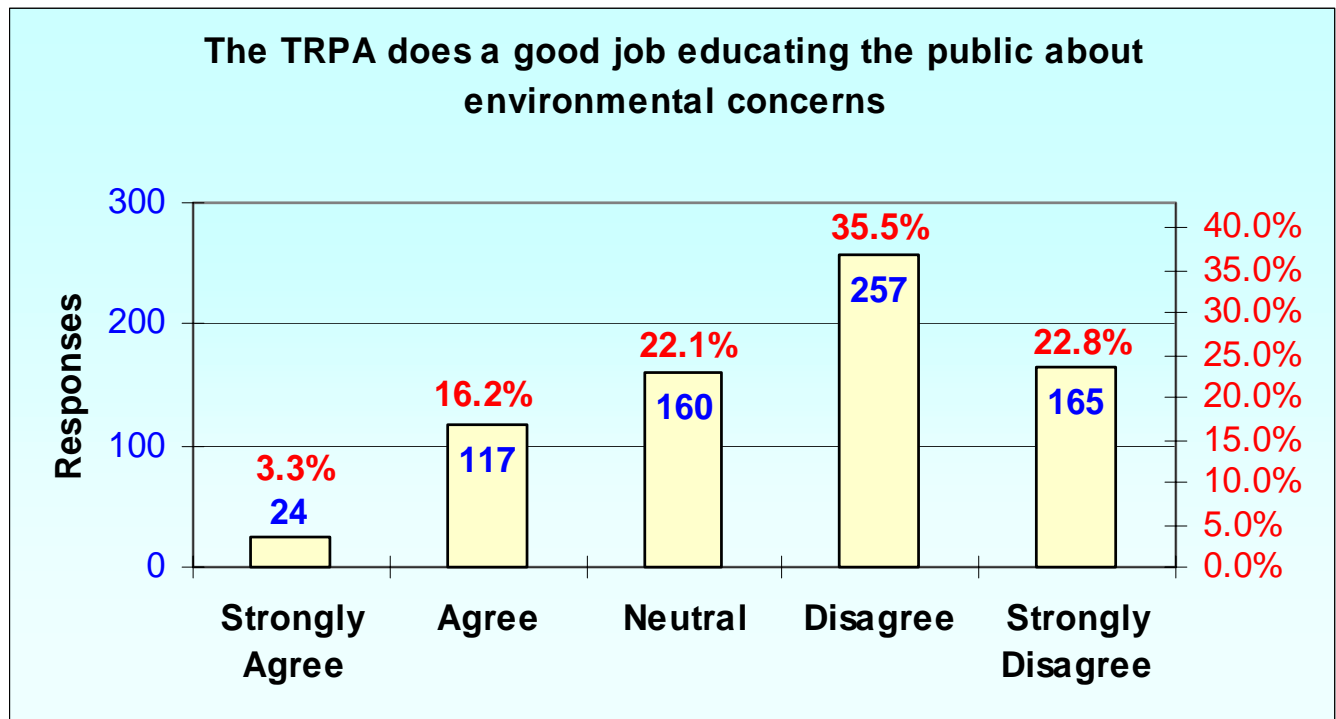
# Tahoe Regional Planning Agency

## Survey – 2006

*“Motorboaters have repeatedly asked the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency why pollution in Emerald Bay is considered long-term degradation even though data indicates pollution completely disappears during winter and spring” (Tahoe Daily Tribune, August 24, 2005).*

Q9 – The TRPA does a good job educating the public about environmental concerns.

☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree



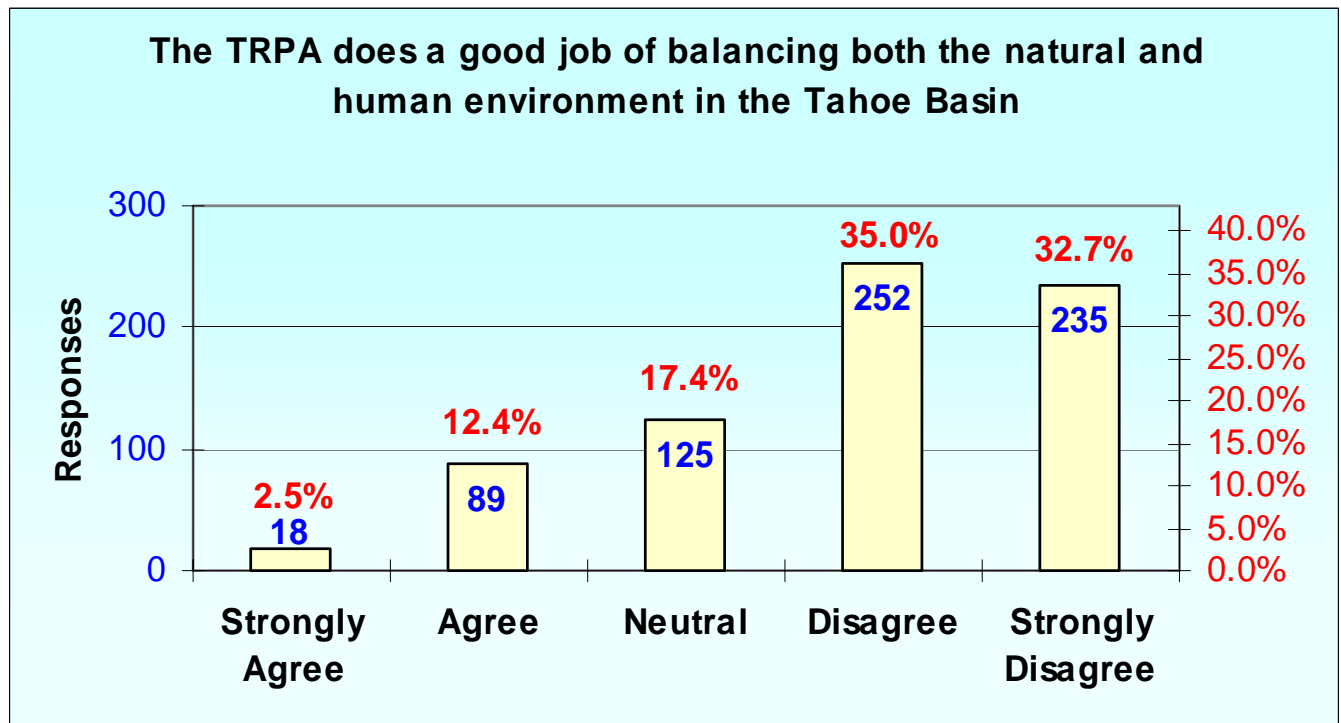
# Tahoe Regional Planning Agency

## Survey – 2006

**“The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency cooperatively leads the effort to preserve, restore and enhance the unique natural and human environment of the Lake Tahoe region now and in the future” (TRPA Mission Statement).**

Q10 – The TRPA does a good job of balancing both the natural and human environment in the Tahoe Basin.

☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree



# Tahoe Regional Planning Agency

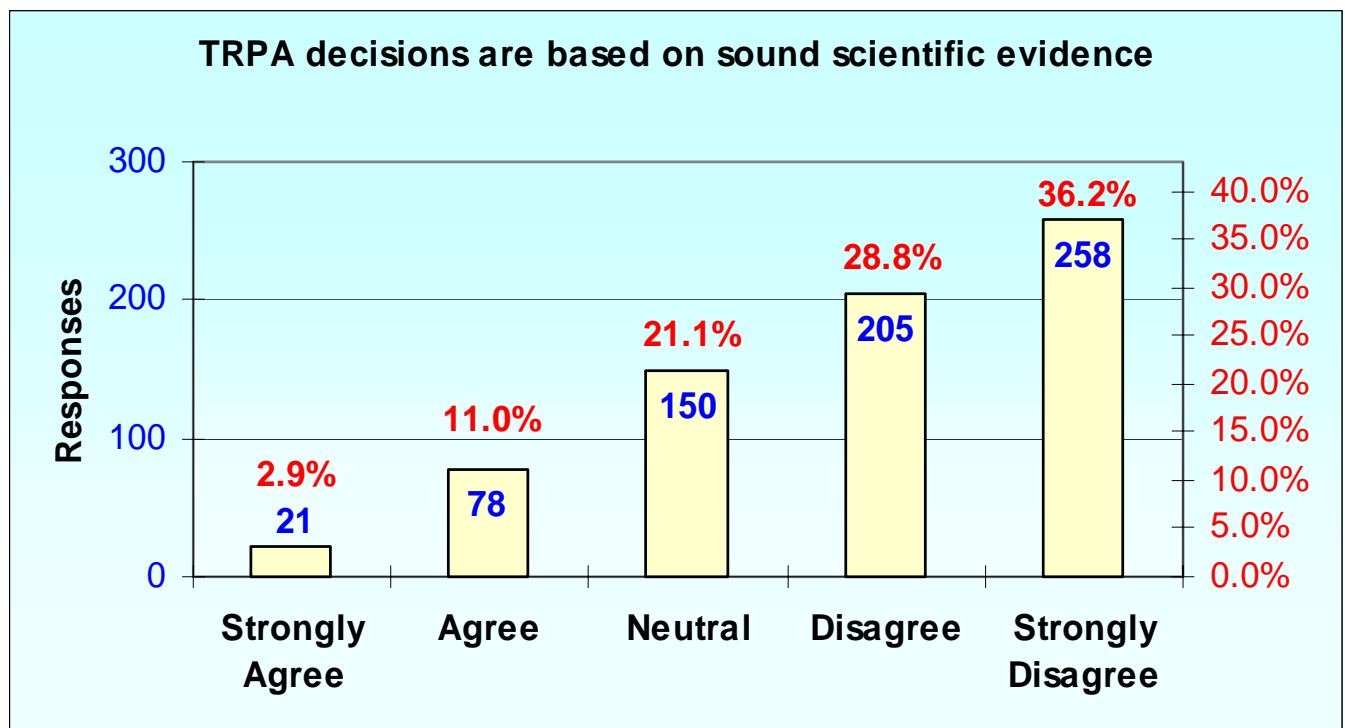
## Survey – 2006

*"The process on which you base policy needs to be scientifically sound. Where there are disputes, the board needs a process to verify and have a peer-reviewed science that you can depend on"* (South Lake Tahoe City Manager Dave Jinkens as quoted in the Tahoe Daily Tribune, August 25, 2005).

*"We are simply asking TRPA to follow the law by demonstrating that environmental programs produce measurable results up-front, before we take a gamble on developments that will harm Lake Tahoe if left unchecked"* (Editorial by League to Save Lake Tahoe Program Director John Friedrich, Tahoe Daily Tribune, September 26, 2005).

Q11 –TRPA decisions are based on sound scientific evidence.

☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree



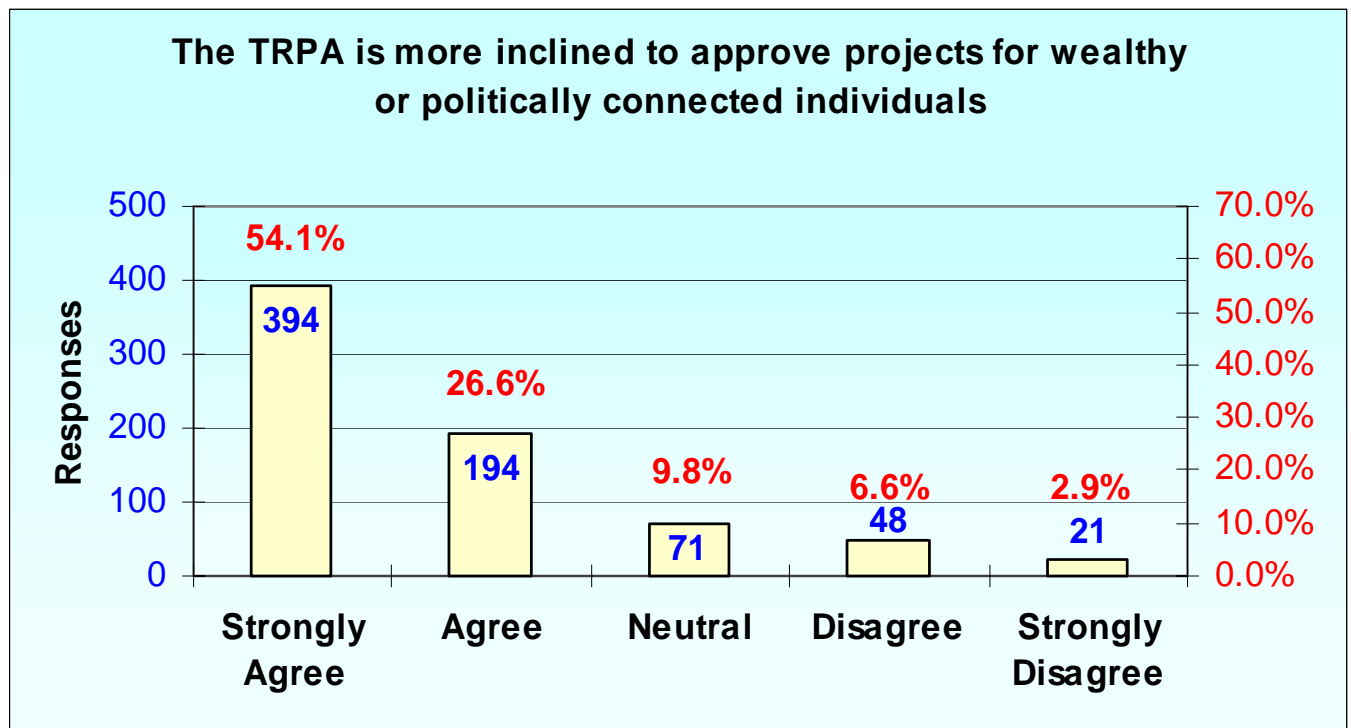
# Tahoe Regional Planning Agency

## Survey – 2006

***"There's a distrust of TRPA, that people of influence get their way"***  
**(Executive Director John Singlaub as quoted in the Tahoe Daily Tribune, March 25, 2005).**

Q12 – The TRPA is more inclined to approve projects for wealthy or politically connected individuals.

☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree



# Tahoe Regional Planning Agency

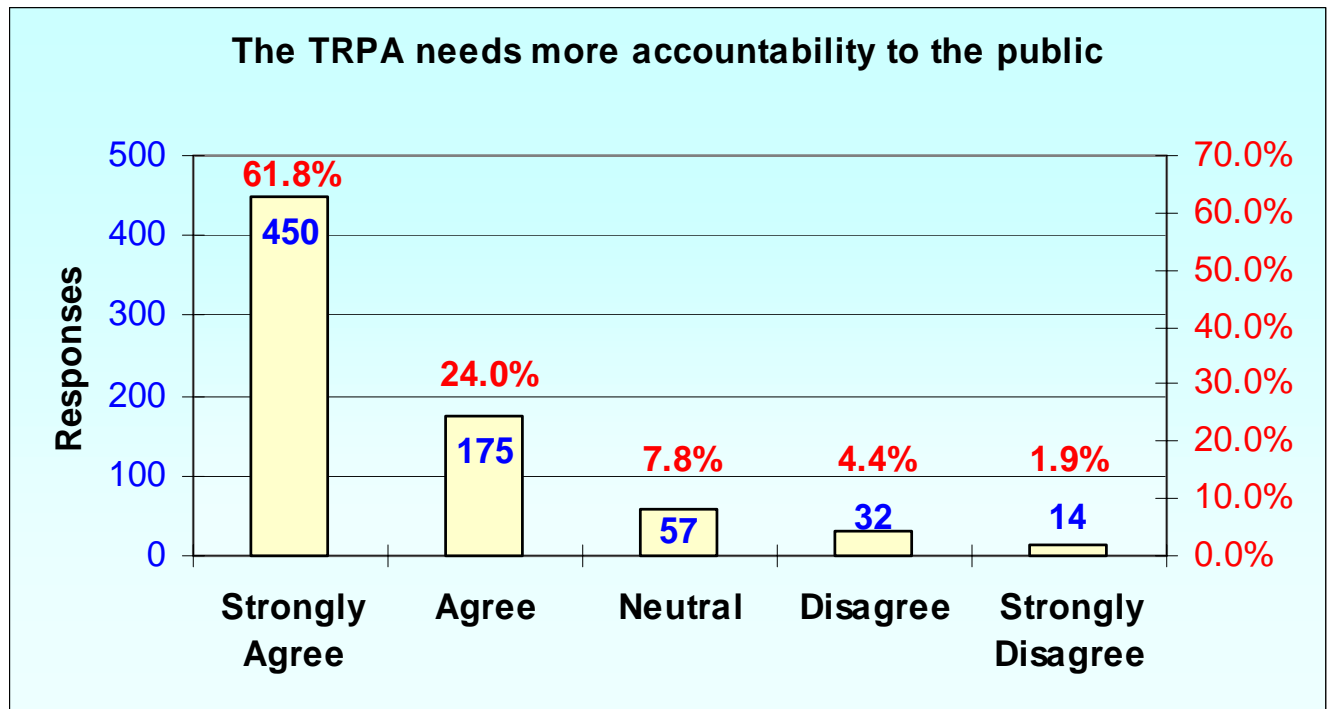
## Survey – 2006

*“TRPA representatives said in a statement Wednesday they have been taking steps to improve accountability and service to the public, and the agency is working toward debunking a ‘myth that everyone loathes the TRPA and lives in fear of the agency.’ Their polls show public opinion is evenly split” (Tahoe Daily Tribune, August 11, 2005).*

*“Unfortunately what starts out as a noble government program evolves into an out-of-touch and uncontrollable mess” (e-mail to Assemblyman Leslie).*

Q13 –The TRPA needs more accountability to the public.

☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree





# Tahoe Regional Planning Agency

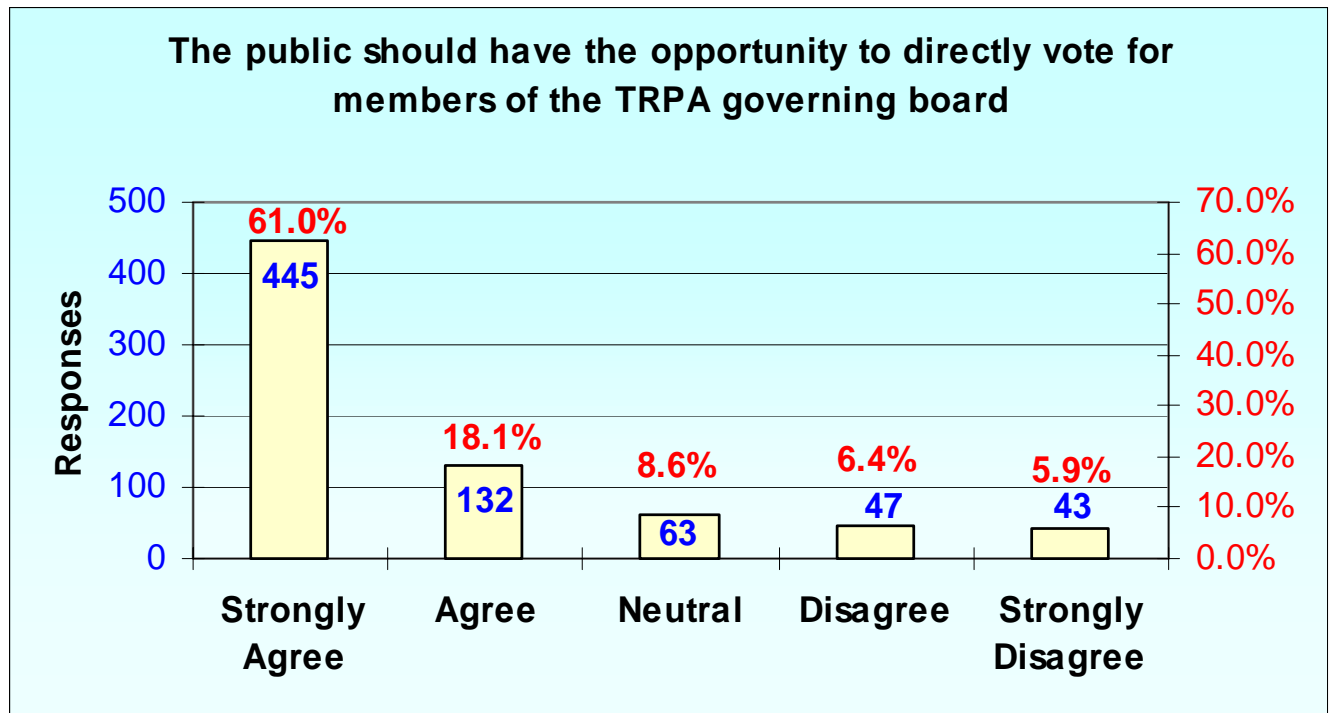
## Survey – 2006

*“Let's hope Mr. Merrill finds the middle ground he claims is needed with land issues ‘up here.’ I fear that from his vantage point down there in San Francisco, he seems to think he already knows what anyone and everyone up here feels about TRPA”* (Letter to the editor, Tahoe Daily Tribune, January 31, 2005).

*“Is there any way that the TRPA board could be elected by the voters residing in the Lake Tahoe Basin?”* (e-mail to Assemblyman Leslie)

Q14 – The public should have the opportunity to directly vote for members of members of the TRPA Governing Board.

☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree



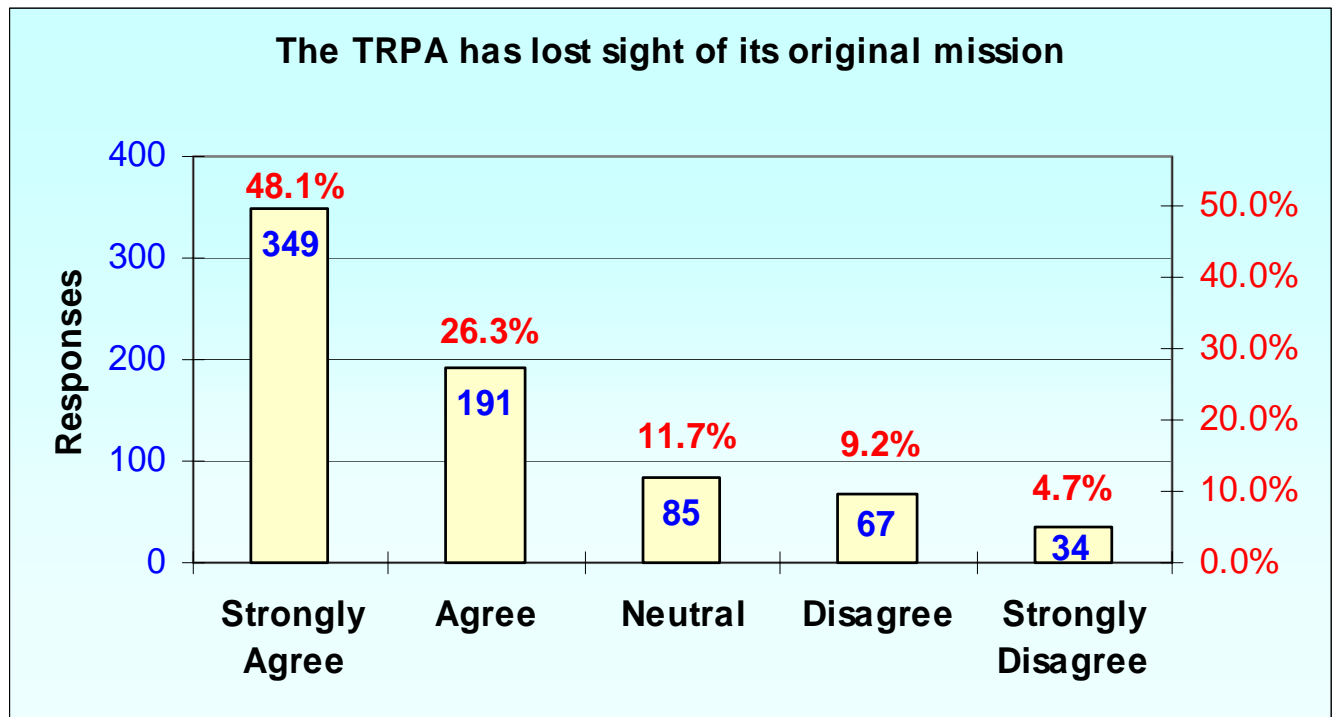
# Tahoe Regional Planning Agency

## Survey – 2006

***“I believe this agency has become an unaccountable and bureaucratic agency that has some how lost sight of its true purpose” (e-mail to Assemblyman Leslie).***

Q15 –The TRPA has lost sight of its original mission.

☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree



# Tahoe Regional Planning Agency

## Survey – 2006

***“I think the TRPA has outlived its usefulness, and it is time for it to go away”*** Letter to the editor, Tahoe Daily Tribune, August 26, 2005).

***“If we, the people, want to ‘Keep Tahoe Blue,’ we don’t need new piers. We need a new TRPA”*** (Another letter to the editor, Tahoe Daily Tribune, August 26, 2005).

Q16 – The TRPA should be phased out.

☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree

